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Pd.3

MTV

Kayne West making an idiot out of himself at the VMA’s, sixteen year old girls getting pregnant, the drama that never seems to stop on the hill s. I mean who wouldn’t want to watch these shows. Deny it all you want with your sayings of how MTV isn’t about music anymore, but we all know that MTV is everyone’s guilty pleasure. I’ll admit it, I chose MTV as my English essay because I like watching show that are completely pointless and very entertaining. Even though I watch MTV on a regular basis, I didn’t have that much knowledge on it. I the most I knew about MTV is that it stands for “Music Television” and that “Video killed the radio star” was the first music video. So going into this I learned some very interesting things.

The wondrous birth of MTV was on August 1, 1981 at 12:01 in the morning in New York City. The parents of this wonderful creating were Robert W. Pittman, president and chief executive officer of MTV Networks and vice president John Lack. The idea of MTV didn’t come out of nowhere it started back in 1977 when Warner Cable launched the first two- way interactive cable TV system, QUBE, in Columbus, Ohio. The QUBE system offered many specialized channels, including a children’s channel called Pinwheel which would later become Nickelodeon. One of these specialized channels was Sight on Sound, a music channel that featured concert footage and music oriented TV programs; with the interactive QUBE service, viewers could vote for their favorite songs and artists. All of this helped spark the idea of MTV. (Wikimedia, 2009)

At 12:01 a.m. on August 1, 1981 MTV was introduced to television, but only a few thousand people on a single cable system in northern New Jersey could see it. During this time, the first words were spoken on MTV. According to Robinson (2000), it was read by John Lack saying the words, “Ladies and Gentlemen, rock and roll!” Also during the launching of MTV it showed Neil Armstrong planting an MTV flag into the moon. Although MTV producers originally planned to use Neil Armstrong’s quote “One small step…” it was declined by Neil’s lawyers, so they switched the quote with a beeping noise. After the introduction MTV played the first music video by The Buggles called “Video killed the radio star.” After the first music video was shown the screen went blank because MTV employees were inserting a tape into the VCR to show the second music video by Pat Benatar with the song called “you better run.” From that day in August things just started to go up for the new and uprising television show MTV.

The main purpose of MTV was to have young fresh faces host and introduce music videos that were being played. The main idea at the beginning was to play music videos all day every day. Most of the music video that made up MTV’s programming was cured promotional or concert clips from whatever source that could be found. But as MTV grew more popular more record companies began to create more elaborate clips. As the years went on MTV grew bigger, but most of the music video s they played didn’t have many African American artists. It wasn’t until 1983 when Michael Jackson broke the color barrier with his music video of “Bille Jean”. But after the color barrier was broken MTV began going through some growing pains during the mid-1980’s. MTV ratings began to decline and people started to criticize how MTV was running. MTV producers decided to down play the music video and add some show onto the channel. The addition to the channel was a big success with shows like “The Real World” and “Beavis and Butthead.” The shows appealed to more teens and the once low ratings started to bump up. And by the mid-1990’s MTV had reached 270 million households in more than 125 countries scattered across five continents. (Wikimedia, 2009)

In conclusion, MTV has grown from 24/7 music videos to now no music at all. It started off slow, but over time grew viewers and ratings. It went through a rough path like all TV channels do and sadly but surely lost it’s main purpose of playing music videos, and now is mostly TV shows. But after doing this essay I learned a lot of history and information about my guilty pleasure.